United Nations S/2017/304

Security Council

Distr.: General
10 April 2017

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Nigeria

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and subsequent resolutions on children and armed conflict. It is the first report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Nigeria and contains information on the impact of armed conflict on children during the period from January 2013 to December 2016.

The report focuses on the three States in the north-east most affected by the conflict (Adamawa, Borno and Yobe) and highlights grave violations against children committed by parties to the conflict, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (commonly known as "Boko Haram"[a]), the Nigerian security forces and Civilian Joint Task Force. In the context of the regional spillover of Boko Haram's activities, issues of concern in neighbouring countries are also included.

The report notes that the highly volatile and rapidly evolving security situation in north-eastern Nigeria often resulted in limited monitoring access for the United Nations, and as a consequence, the information contained in the report does not reflect the full scale of the grave violations committed against children. However, the report documents trends and provides information on verified incidents, including a large number of attacks on schools, the mass abduction of children and the use of girls as suicide bombers by Boko Haram. The screening and detention of children for their alleged association with Boko Haram is also highlighted.

At the end of the report, the Secretary-General provides recommendations to end and prevent grave violations in Nigeria and improve the protection of children.

[a] Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wa'l-Jihad in Arabic means "people committed to propagating the Prophet's teachings and jihad". Boko Haram means "Western education is a sin" in Hausa language.

17-05821 (E) 020517

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. The present report, which is prepared pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and subsequent resolutions on children and armed conflict, is the first on Nigeria. It covers the period from January 2013 to December 2016 and highlights trends and patterns pertaining to the six grave violations against children in the context of the conflict in the north-eastern region of the country.

2. Following the listing of Boko Haram for the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals, Nigeria was included as a country situation in my annual report on children and armed conflict (A/68/878-S/2014/339), issued in May 2014. In December 2014, the in-country monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations was initiated. Shortly thereafter, in January 2015, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict visited Nigeria and launched the country task force on monitoring and reporting. In June 2015 and April 2016, respectively, Boko Haram and the Civilian Joint Task Force were listed in the annexes to my annual reports on the recruitment and use of children (see A/69/926-S/2015/409 and A/70/836-S/2016/360). Following a request by the Security Council in its resolution 2225 (2015) to list parties to conflict that engage in the abduction of children, Boko Haram was also included in the annexes to my report of April 2016 (A/70/836-S/2016/360) for that violation.

3. From January 2013 until mid-2015, the verification of incidents was challenging, owing to the volatile security situation in north-eastern Nigeria and the lack of access to the populations most affected by the conflict. As the Nigerian security forces retook territory from Boko Haram in 2015 and 2016, the country task force on monitoring and reporting was able to verify an increasing number of incidents. Some areas remained inaccessible, however, and violations are likely to be underreported. Therefore, in addition to verified violations in areas where access was possible, the present report describes trends based on credible information on incidents and a comprehensive analysis.

II. Political and security developments

A. Political developments

4. From October 2012 until April 2013, the Government, civil society and influential community leaders embarked upon negotiations with Boko Haram to reach a political settlement. The former President, Goodluck Jonathan, set up a 26-member committee to lead this process; however, the initiative met with limited success.

5. In May 2013, the Senate endorsed the declaration of a state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States, enabling the Federal Government to deploy security forces and conduct military operations against Boko Haram. This period witnessed a significant deterioration in the humanitarian situation, the temporary shutdown of the Maiduguri airport and the closure of all schools in north-eastern States from December 2013 to June 2015.

6. In May 2015, following a tense build-up but a largely peaceful general election, the President, Mohammed Buhari, was sworn in and he appointed his Cabinet in November 2015. Following the change in Government, access for the United Nations to conflict-affected areas improved and allowed for the provision of increased support services to victims, as well as the improved documentation and verification of grave violations. The Government also undertook a number of initiatives to enhance the protection of children, which are outlined in section VII of the report.

B. Security developments

7. Throughout 2013 and the first half of 2014, the security and humanitarian situation in north-eastern Nigeria deteriorated significantly. A joint humanitarian assessment conducted in September 2013 by the National Emergency Management Agency, the United Nations and the Nigerian Red Cross, estimated that approximately 5.9 million people in the north-east had been affected by the conflict. In this regard, by December 2014, 389,281 internally displaced persons (54 per cent of whom were children) were identified in Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe States, according to the Displacement Tracking Matrix.[1] Borno State was not included in the assessment owing to inaccessibility.

8. In late 2014 and early 2015, Boko Haram controlled large swathes of territory, including 12 of 27 local government areas in Borno, 5 of 21 in Adamawa and 2 of 17 in Yobe. By February 2015, an estimated 800,000 children were internally displaced and at least 192,000 persons (52 per cent of whom were children) had sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

9. Late 2014 also witnessed the progressive expansion of Boko Haram's activities into Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, including the cross-border recruitment, killing, maiming and abduction of children as well as attacks on schools. The threat of Boko Haram to regional stability prompted military operations to be conducted through the Multinational Joint Task Force, comprising troops from the Lake Chad Basin countries and Benin. In January 2015, Boko Haram overran the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force in Baga, Nigeria. Subsequently, the expansion of the Task Force was expedited, with troop numbers increasing and the headquarters relocated to N'Djamena.

10. In April 2015, Boko Haram renamed itself the Islamic State West Africa, announcing allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In June 2015, in conjunction with the Civilian Joint Task Force and other pro-Government local groups, the Nigerian security forces intensified their military operations. The involvement of the Civilian Joint Task Force significantly bolstered the military response and towards the end of 2015, the Nigerian security forces had liberated 67 locations, mainly in and around the Sambisa forest, and in Marta and Damboa local government areas in Borno State. According to the Nigerian security forces, only two local government areas were under Boko Haram's control (Abadam and Mobar, Borno State) by the end of 2015. In December 2015, the Federal Government announced that it had "technically defeated" the group.

11. As Boko Haram was pushed back, the group reverted to attacks on "soft targets", including suicide attacks, which increased from 26 in 2014 to 191 in the period from January 2015 to December 2016 in Nigeria. Children were increasingly used in these attacks, which spread from north-eastern Nigeria to Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, where 111 suicide attacks were recorded during the reporting period.

12. In 2016, the Nigerian security forces liberated an additional 119 villages and areas, including the two remaining local government areas held by Boko Haram. Reports in this period indicated that Boko Haram elements and their families were surrendering in large numbers to the Nigerian security forces, in part as the result of worsening living conditions. It is estimated that more than 25,000 former Boko Haram captives were also rescued by the Nigerian security forces or escaped between October 2015 and June 2016. For instance, in March 2016, the Nigerian security forces and the Forces armées camerounaises reportedly separated 11,595

[1] The matrix is led by the International Organization for Migration and managed by the National Emergency Management Agency.

Boko Haram captives in Adamawa and Borno States, in particular along the border with Cameroon.

13. During this period, operations against Boko Haram resulted in further displacement of the population. As at December 2016, the Displacement Tracking Matrix indicated that there were 2,152,000 displaced persons within Nigeria, including more than 1 million children, and more than 460,000 people were refugees or internally displaced in neighbouring countries. In Borno State, 13 "satellite" camps for internally displaced persons were set up and, at the time of writing in January 2017, run by the Nigerian security forces, which compromised their civilian nature and created additional risks of violations against children. In particular, children associated with the Civilian Joint Task Force were observed providing security in the camps.

III. Parties to conflict

A. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram

14. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, renamed the Islamic State West Africa in 2015 and commonly known as Boko Haram, emerged in 2002 in Borno State as an Islamist movement in response to local grievances.

15. Up until 2009, Boko Haram had engaged in low-level conflict with police and community members. In 2009, a crackdown on Boko Haram by the police in Borno State triggered fighting between the group and security personnel. Violence spread across the States of Bauchi, Kano and Yobe, and culminated in a battle in Maiduguri on 30 July, which ended when the Nigerian security forces captured and killed Boko Haram's leader, Mohammed Yusuf.

16. From 2010, under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram became more violent and carried out targeted attacks against the police, politicians, religious leaders, villages, towns and public institutions. The targeting of Abuja demonstrated increasing activities outside the north-east. In June 2011, Boko Haram bombed the police headquarters and, two months later, in August, carried out a suicide attack against the United Nations headquarters in the capital. Attacks on civilians and public institutions continued throughout the reporting period and are documented in the relevant sections on grave violations. Later in the reporting period, Boko Haram's activities spread from north-eastern Nigeria to neighbouring countries and there were also reports of foreign elemenis in the ranks of Boko Haram. In May 2014, the group was added to the List established and maintained by the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee with respect to individuals, groups, undertakings and other entities associated with Al-Qaida. In August 2016, there was an apparent split within Boko Haram when ISIL announced that Abu Musab al-Barnawi was considered to be the new leader of the group. Abubakar Shekau continued to operate under the name of JAS.

B. Civilian Joint Task Force and vigilante groups

17. In early 2013, the Civilian Joint Task Force[2] was formed in Maiduguri as a militia to assist the Nigerian security forces. The Task Force is not a single unified

[2] The Civilian Joint Task Force was named to demonstrate the link with the Government Joint Task Force, which was tasked with security operaations in the north-east until August 2013.

body but rather a collection of vigilante groups with the shared goal of community security. The size, structure and organization of the subgroups vary widely.

18. Initially, the Civilian Joint Task Force comprised youth who joined to defend their towns and villages and had no clear command structure. However, as the group grew, it received military training as well as financial and logistical support from the Federal and State Governments. Other loosely organized vigilante groups reporting to community leaders also formed in Adamawa and Yobe States, and were sometimes referred to as the Civilian Joint Task Force.

19. While no age restriction was in place at the time of the establishment of the Civilian Joint Task Force, a rule was introduced to its oral code of conduct in the course of 2013 that "no child below the age of 15 will be allowed to join the Civilian Joint Task Force". The Task Force was composed of different types of "members": formal members who were trained, paid and uniformed; "volunteers" who supported the formal Civilian Joint Task Force; and "freelancers" used for ad hoc tasks. Reportedly, children often started performing freelance tasks before becoming volunteers and formal members.

20. All subgroups of the Civilian Joint Task Force in Maiduguri have reportedly been recognized by the Government of Borno State as security actors; however, the Federal Government has only engaged directly with the Borno Youth Empowerment Scheme. The Scheme has therefore emerged as the most structured subgroup and, as at December 2016, it reportedly comprised 1,500 members who received training and arms from the Nigerian security forces. The group's close links with the Federal Government increased its legitimacy and status within affected communities.

C. Nigerian security forces, including the 3rd, 7th and 8th Infantry Divisions

21. In 2011, the Joint Task Force, comprising the army, navy and air forces, the State security services and the national police, was tasked with countering Boko Haram. In August 2013, the 7th Infantry Division of the Nigerian security forces replaced the Joint Task Force and assumed overarching command of security operations in Borno and parts of Adamawa and Yobe States.

22. The 3rd Infantry Division was tasked with containing the Boko Haram threat in the areas surrounding the epicentre of military operations (Gombe State and parts of Adamawa and Yobe States). In mid-2015, the 8th Infantry Division was also deployed to curtail Boko Haram's activities in parts of southern Borno State. Collectively, the three infantry divisions, dubbed "Operation Lafiya Dole", were responsible for the military operations against Boko Haram. The Operation was still ongoing at the time of writing in January 2017.

23. In the context of military operations, there have been credible allegations of human rights violations by both the Nigerian security forces and the Civilian Joint Task Force.

D. Regional security forces

24. The regional security forces responsible for cross-border operations against Boko Haram include the Nigerian security forces, the Forces armées nigeriennes, the Armée nationale tchadienne and the Forces armées camerounaises. These forces operate within their respective territory but also combine forces for joint operations.

25. The Multinational Joint Task Force comprises units from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria. It is headquartered in N'Djamena, and mandated to bring an end to the Boko Haram insurgency. In May 2015, the Multinational Joint Task Force was officially established pursuant to communiqués adopted by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, which endorsed the strategic concept of operations and authorized the increase of the strength of the Task Force from 7,500 to 10,000 personnel.

IV. Grave violations against children

26. In 2013 and the first half of 2014, Boko Haram was the main perpetrator of grave violations, in particular the killing, maiming and abduction of children, as well as attacks on schools and hospitals. In the second half of 2014 and the beginning of 2015, Boko Haram intensified attacks and changed tactics from hit-and-run attacks on public institutions to attacking towns and villages and holding territory. During that period, incidents of child recruitment and use, abductions and sexual violence increased and Boko Haram continued to be the main perpetrator of grave violations. At the same time, the Civilian Joint Task Force was recruiting and using children to support the Nigerian security forces in their operations.

27. From mid-2015 to the end of the reporting period, as Boko Haram elements were pushed back by the Nigerian security forces, they reverted to hit-and-run attacks. They used girls to perpetrate suicide bombings and intensified the use of improvised explosive devices-as-landmines. In the same period, the Nigerian security forces encountered large numbers of people in areas previously held by Boko Haram. The Nigerian security forces and regional forces arrested significant numbers of suspected members of Boko Haram, including children, for their alleged association with Boko Haram.

28. The loss of territory by Boko Haram from mid-2015, combined with the large number of victims encountered by the Nigerian security forces, facilitated United Nations access and allowed greater documentation and verification of grave violations towards the end of the reporting period.

A. Recruitment and use of children

29. While the recruitment and use of children was widespread in the north-east, a highly volatile security situation, the fear of disclosing identities by victims and families and the lack of access to affected populations hampered the ability of the United Nations to verify incidents. Estimates indicate, however, that at least 8,000 children have been recruited and used by Boko Haram since 2009. According to the leadership of the Civilian Joint Task Force, by the end of 2016, their strength was an estimated 26,000 members, which reportedly included many boys between 10 and 18 years of age.

Boko Haram

30. Boko Haram reportedly benefited from a fertile recruitment ground for youth recruits early on in the conflict owing to perceived social injustice as well as high levels of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment in the north-east. Abduction was also a prevalent tactic for the recruitment and use of children, as highlighted in section IV.E of the report. Between July 2015 and December 2016, the recruitment and use of 1,650 children (1,010 boys and 640 girls) in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States were verified. Credible accounts were also received of the association of children as

young as four years old with the group. With the regional spillover of Boko Haram's activities, the cross-border recruitment and use of children were also documented.

31. Testimonies of those who were separated from Boko Haram underlined that children not only ended up in the ranks of the group through abduction, but also owing to financial incentives, peer pressure and familial ties. This included instances of parents giving up their children for economic gain or to obtain security guarantees. In Maiduguri, two religious schools also targeted school dropouts and were major settings for child recruitment up until 2014.

32. Children were used in direct hostilities, for planting improvised explosive devices and burning schools and houses and in support roles such as cooks, messengers and lookouts. Children were also reportedly used as human shields to protect Boko Haram elements during military operations. Many children were also subjected to forceful religious conversions and forced marriage and used for sexual purposes. Predominately from mid-2014 to the end of the reporting period, children, including girls as young as 10, were used by Boko Haram in suicide bombings. A total of 90 children (70 girls and 20 boys; 27 in Cameroon, 16 in Chad, 3 in the Niger and 44 in Nigeria) were used in 56 incidents of suicide attacks. This number comprised 4 girls who were used in 2014, 40 girls and 16 boys in 2015 and 26 girls and 4 boys in 2016.

33. Towards the end of the reporting period, as the Nigerian security forces separated people in the course of military operations, the full scale of the association of children with Boko Haram started to be documented. For example, in 2015, of the 1,010 children (422 boys and 588 girls) encountered or rescued during the course of military operations in north-eastern Nigeria, 204 children (117 girls and 87 boys) had been recruited and used. In January 2016, 134 boys who had been recruited by Boko Haram surrendered to the 7th Infantry Division of the Nigerian security forces after taking part in hostilities for nearly two years in the Sambisa forest.

Civilian Joint Task Force

34. While the oral code of conduct of the Civilian Joint Task Force indicated that 15 years was the minimum age of recruitment, the use of children as young as 9 years was documented in the reporting period. For example, in April 2016, a member of the guard unit of the Task Force revealed that Bolori 2 and Masori areas outside Maiduguri had particularly high concentrations of children associated with the group. In total, between November 2015 and December 2016, the United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 228 children (209 boys and 19 girls).

35. Children were used mainly for intelligence-related purposes, search operations, night patrols and crowd control and to man guard posts. Some reportedly conducted arrests of suspected Boko Haram elements while others allegedly participated in combat during the initial emergence of the Civilian Joint Task Force.

36. The use of children for intelligence-related purposes was a particular concern. In two separate incidents in November 2015, 30 boys and four girls aged between 9 and 16 years were seen manning the security gates at Galtimari Primary School, directing road traffic and controlling crowds in Maiduguri. During interviews, boys acknowledged their recruitment and participation in the activities of the Civilian Joint Task Force, including spying for the group. Moreover, in July 2016, 115 boys aged 12 to 17 years were verified as recruited and used by the Civilian Joint Task Force across 12 local government areas of Borno State. While 78 boys were manning checkpoints, directing road traffic and conducting random searches on highways, 37 of them were assisting the Nigerian security forces in screening and

identifying Boko Haram members. The use of children to identify Boko Haram members is deeply troubling as it puts them at serious risk of retaliation.

Deprivation of liberty for alleged association with Boko Haram

37. Starting in 2014, adults and children encountered during military operations were classified into categories of "combatants" or "non-combatants" by a task force led by the Office of the National Security Adviser. Boys aged 17 years were automatically considered combatants; however, much younger children, including girls, were also categorized as combatants during the screening procedures. "Combatants" were transferred to military detention facilities or into the custody of the Nigerian Prison Service. Those classified as "non-combatants" were also deprived of their liberty and some were entered in a "deradicalization" programme in facilities run by the Office of the National Security Adviser.

38. In 2015, owing to restricted access to sites where children were detained, the United Nations documented only 129 cases of children (69 boys and 60 girls) deprived of their liberty for their alleged association with Boko Haram. Once access was granted in 2016, the documented number of cases increased to 237 (198 boys and 39 girls). The average duration of deprivation of liberty of children ranged from three to four months; however, at the end of the reporting period, there were 68 boys aged between 12 and 17 years who had been in detention since September 2015. In 2016, 1,128 children (545 boys and 583 girls) were also deprived of their liberty based on their parents' alleged association with Boko Haram.

39. The children documented in 2015 included 85 children held in Giwa military barracks in Maiduguri, 22 at Aguata camp in eastern Nigeria by the Office of the National Security Adviser and 21 girls held in Lagos by the Department of State Services and the Nigerian security forces. In a concerning example in that period, on 1 December, an 11-year-old boy was arrested in Maiduguri, allegedly for being a suspected "Boko Haram terrorist". His photograph had been displayed on posters of most wanted Boko Haram members. Moreover, in that same year, the United Nations documented that 84 boys and 169 girls, who were encountered during military operations in the Sambisa forest, participated in a deradicalization programme managed by the Officer of the National Security Adviser in Kaduna State. It was envisaged that children would participate in the programme for a maximum period of 90 days; however, the duration of the programme was often extended to 180 days and beyond.

40. In April 2016, 84 children (61 boys and 23 girls) allegedly associated with Boko Haram surrendered to the 7th Infantry Division in Maiduguri. Following military screening in Borno State, 38 boys aged between 5 and 17 years were deemed to be members of Boko Haram by the Nigerian security forces and transferred to Giwa barracks. During a visit to Giwa barracks detention facilities the following month, the United Nations documented 66 boys aged between 10 to 17 years who had been screened and deemed by the military to be children associated with Boko Haram. In addition, there were 149 women and young mothers (those aged 18 to 24 years may have been abducted while under age 18), a number of who were married to Boko Haram elements.

41. The use of children who had been deprived of their liberty by the Nigerian security forces and the Civilian Joint Task Force was a concern, particularly, as noted above, with regard to their role in identifying other Boko Haram members. In a similar vein, during the visit in May 2016, four boys aged between 14 and 16 years, who underwent screening and were deemed to not be associated with Boko Haram, were also being used in support roles by the military at the barracks.

42. Conditions of detention in the Giwa barracks improved in late 2016, as compared with earlier in the year when there were poorly ventilated and overcrowded buildings and no sanitation facilities, electricity or clean drinking water. Between visits in April and December 2016, there was improved provision of food, hygiene and sanitation facilities as well as in the health situation of detainees. However, there was still a lack of clothing, nutritional supplements, adequate clean water, HIV screening kits and essential drugs.

43. As at December 2016, the Nigerian security forces had released 1,058 children (536 boys and 522 girls) who were deprived of liberty after being encountered during military operations. Of these children, 126 (83 boys and 43 girls) were allegedly associated with Boko Haram. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) worked with partners to provide care and protection services to children released from military detention.

44. Children were also detained in neighbouring countries. In one instance in December 2014 in Cameroon, the Forces armées camerounaises reportedly dismantled a school located in Guirvidig, Mayo-Dania district near the Nigerian border, in which 84 boys aged between 4 and 17 years were found in the presence of adult instructors allegedly affiliated with Boko Haram. The children were detained for approximately six months but were released following advocacy by the United Nations. In 2016, also in Cameroon, 33 boys were detained. According to information received by the United Nations, only two boys were released in 2016; however, in their response to the present report, the Government indicated that others had been released and reintegrated. In the Niger, 88 boys were detained in Niamey for their alleged association with Boko Haram; 27 of those were subsequently released. Advocacy by UNICEF and partners led to the transfer of other children from adult to juvenile detention facilities.

B. Killing and maiming

45. Civilians, including children, were killed and maimed as a result of attacks by Boko Haram on towns, villages, roads and public places and also as a result of suicide bombings, confrontations between Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces, improvised explosive device attacks and landmines. According to an in-depth United Nations mapping exercise, at least 17,073 persons were killed and 28,788 others were wounded in 1,156 incidents in the north-east during the reporting period.

46. Disaggregated data on the age of the victims was often unavailable; however, the United Nations documented accounts of 3,909 children (1,428 boys, 1,021 girls and 1,460 unknown sex) killed and 7,333 children (2,101 boys, 1,459 girls and 3,773 unknown sex) maimed during 474 conflict-related incidents in the reporting period. Of these, the United Nations verified 139 incidents (29 per cent) in which 1,044 children (399 girls, 551 boys and 94 unknown sex) were killed and 1,350 (520 girls, 434 boys and 396 unknown sex) were injured. The verified incidents took place mainly between August 2015 and June 2016, when access had improved. The unverified incidents largely occurred between January 2013 and July 2015. Most child casualties were reported in the States of Borno (71 per cent), Yobe (20 per cent) and Adamawa (9 per cent).

47. Indiscriminate ground attacks, including incidents of shooting, mortar fire and raids on civilian targets, and armed confrontation between Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces, accounted for 47 per cent (5,392 casualties) of the total reported number of children killed and maimed. In this regard, attacks on schools by

Boko Haram resulted in significant casualties, with 480 schoolchildren reportedly killed and at least 200 others maimed.

48. Suicide attacks were a recurrent tactic by Boko Haram and increased significantly starting in 2014. These attacks became the second leading cause of child casualties, accounting for 3,154 (28 per cent), comprising 1,003 children killed (319 boys, 488 girls and 196 unknown sex) and 2,151 maimed (755 girls, 437 boys and 959 unknown sex). While no suicide attacks were recorded in 2013, 32 incidents were documented in 2014; the number peaked in 2015, with 89 incidents; and 70 incidents were recorded in 2016.

49. In a particularly violent incident, 94 children (56 girls and 38 boys) were killed in November 2014 by two suicide bombers and four gunmen during an attack by Boko Haram on the Grand Mosque in Kano State. On 13 February 2015, a suicide bomber targeted a police post in Yamarkum village, Borno State, killing 36 persons, including 22 children (7 boys and 15 girls) who were selling products at the checkpoint. On 9 February 2016, two female suicide bombers detonated explosives at a camp for internally displaced persons in Dikwa town, Borno State, killing 32 children (17 boys and 15 girls) and injuring 14 (12 girls and 2 boys). Fifty-six children (40 girls and 16 boys) were also killed as a result of being used as suicide attackers.

50. Children were also killed in suicide bombings in neighbouring countries, particularly in the latter part of the reporting period, in which 111 incidents were recorded. For example, on 25 January 2016, 10 children (six girls and four boys) were killed and 20 others (15 girls and five boys) injured when two Boko Haram elements detonated explosives at Makary market and Bodo primary school in Cameroon. In Chad, in March 2016, nine children were killed and six others injured during two separate suicide attacks by four girls at Baga-sola and Bol areas in the Lake Chad area.

51. Explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and landmines, accounted for 24 per cent (2,674) of child casualties for the period under review. For instance, in September 2015, 10 people, including two girls aged between 13 and 14 years, died when their vehicle drove over an improvised explosive device between Baga town and Dabam Shata in Borno State. On 29 May 2016, a tricycle exploded after driving over an improvised explosive device at a checkpoint along Biu-Damboa road in Borno State, resulting in the killing of a boy and a girl and other civilians.

52. Children were also at risk of being killed or maimed during airstrikes targeting suspected Boko Haram positions. During the reporting period, 112 airstrike operations by the Nigerian security forces were recorded in 39 locations in and around the Sambisa forest. As a result, more than 3,000 people were reportedly killed and maimed; however, child casualty numbers were unknown.

53. In the context of security operations, credible allegations were received of violations against civilians, including children, by Nigerian security forces, the Civilian Joint Task Force and vigilante groups. Allegations of extrajudicial killing by the Nigerian security forces were particularly concerning. For example, on 14 March 2014, 640 detainees were reportedly killed by the Nigerian security forces after they fled Giwa barracks in Maiduguri, Borno State, following an attack by Boko Haram. The number of children allegedly killed was unknown. An investigation into the incident was opened by the Nigerian authorities, but there were no prosecutions ongoing as at the time of writing in January 2017. In the fourth quarter of 2016, the United Nations verified the killing of 13 children (12 girls and one boy) aged 11 to 17 by the Nigerian security forces, who reported that the children were suspected suicide bombers. For example, on 15 December,

two girls aged 13 and 15 were shot dead by Nigerian security forces as they approached a military post in Wagga, Adamawa State.

C. Rape and other forms of sexual violence

54. Incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children were challenging to document and the verification of cases was only possible later in the reporting period. However, it is estimated by the United Nations that at least 7,000 girls and women have suffered from sexual violence perpetrated by Boko Haram since 2009, including following abductions and during forced marriage. During the reporting period, the United Nations verified 199 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence affecting 217 children.

55. Girls became pregnant and gave birth as a result of rape. For example, in May 2015, a group of 253 children (84 boys and 169 girls) were encountered during military operations in Borno State and referred to the "deradicalization" programme run by the Office of the National Security Adviser. The Office indicated that 68 child mothers of 112 children had either been raped and/or were "wives" of Boko Haram members. In addition, four girls were pregnant as a result of sexual violence. Twenty-seven girls detained in Giwa barracks in May 2016 were believed to have been "married" to Boko Haram members. Among them, three girls were pregnant.

56. In May 2016, the United Nations verified the rape by Boko Haram of 52 girls aged between 9 and 18 years, who were part of a group rescued by the 8th Infantry Division of the Nigerian security forces. Among them, three girls were pregnant and six had babies. Child protection and sexual and gender-based violence actors were working with State government agencies to provide assistance at the time of writing in January 2017. In the fourth quarter of 2016, the United Nations verified 22 new cases of sexual violence by Boko Haram affecting 21 girls aged between 9 to 17 years.

57. In February 2016, UNICEF and International Alert published a report on perceptions of children born of rape, and of girls and women formerly associated with Boko Haram. The report highlighted their plight during captivity, as well as the challenges they faced when they escaped or were rescued. The findings indicated that many faced stigma and rejection from their families and communities.

58. Allegations of rape, sexual violence and the sexual exploitation of displaced children by members of security forces were a significant concern. In 2016, 83 cases affecting girls and women were reported and allegedly perpetrated by security guards, camp officials, the Civilian Joint Task Force, other vigilante groups and officers of the Nigerian security forces. These incidents took place in seven camps for internally displaced persons in Borno State. In one instance, on 17 November 2016, two girls aged 15 and 17 years were repeatedly raped and physically assaulted by an intelligence officer of the Nigerian security forces at Monguno camp, Borno State. The case was brought to the attention of the 7th Infantry Division and the perpetrator was removed from the camp and suspended. The 17-year-old girl reported that she had also been separately abused by a member of the Civilian Joint Task Force over several months.

D. Attacks on schools and hospitals

59. Starting in 2011, Boko Haram targeted public and private schools that they perceived as providing a Western curriculum. In the north-east, the United Nations

estimated that 1,500 schools had been destroyed since 2014, with at least 1,280 casualties among teachers and students.

60. Attacks by Boko Haram rose in Borno and Yobe States throughout 2013, resulting in the killing of 126 children and 70 teachers. For example, in July 2013, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for an attack on a school in Mamudo, Yobe State, which resulted in the killing of at least 29 boys and one teacher, a number of whom were burned alive. In a particularly deadly attack, on 29 September 2013, Boko Haram opened fire in the dormitory of the College of Agriculture in Gujba, Yobe State, killing 65 students and wounding 18 others. Education officials were also targeted during that period. For example, on 9 April 2013, suspected members of Boko Haram killed four officials of the Borno State Feeding Committee, which ran a primary and secondary school feeding programme, in Dikwa town, Borno State.

61. Attacks on schools and the related killing and maiming of children and teachers slightly decreased in 2014; however, the use of suicide bombings for these attacks increased during this period. For example, in July 2014, a teenage girl detonated a suicide device at Kano State Polytechnic and killed at least six students. In November 2014, a suicide bomber wearing school uniform killed at least 47 schoolchildren and injured 117 others at the Comprehensive Senior Science Secondary School in Potiskum, Yobe State.

62. Throughout 2013 and 2014, continuing attacks and threats of attack against schools in the north-east led to reduced access to education owing to school closures, the flight of teachers and the withdrawal of children from school by their parents. In Borno State, the authorities took the decision to close all primary and secondary schools in March 2014. The following month, during the period that school closures commenced, Boko Haram abducted 276 girls from the Chibok Government Girls Secondary School.

63. In 2015 and 2016, incidents of attacks on schools significantly reduced, with only one incident reported. In February 2015, the Euga Primary School in Bauchi State was attacked and then used for military purposes by Boko Haram, which disrupted the education of approximately 800 children. In October 2015, in the light of the improving security situation, the Government started reopening schools in Maiduguri, Borno State.

64. During the same period, attacks on schools also took place in neighbouring countries. For example, in the Diffa region of the Niger, three incidents were reported in 2016. On 20 November 2016, a primary school in Fiego was attacked, which resulted in the burning down of two classrooms.

65. During the reporting period, 12 cases of use of schools by the Nigerian security forces were reported, comprising 10 schools in Borno State and two in Yobe State. For instance, the security forces reportedly used the Government Day Secondary School in Ngoshe, Borno State as military barracks and a detention facility for a period of two months between April and June 2014. After being vacated by the Nigerian security forces, four schools in Gwoza were burned and destroyed by Boko Haram. At the time of writing in January 2017, seven schools were still being used for military purposes by the Nigerian security forces. The Government indicated that the military presence was to protect the schools; however, this action compromises their civilian status.

66. In 2013, Boko Haram targeted and killed medical personnel, and destroyed and looted health facilities. For example, in February 2013, three doctors were reportedly killed in Potiskum, Yobe State, and 10 health workers were reportedly killed in attacks on polio vaccination centres in Kano State. By the end of 2013, the

health-care system in Borno State had reportedly ceased to function in 12 of the 27 local government areas, as most medical personnel had fled owing to fear of attacks by Boko Haram.

67. From January 2014 to December 2016, there were 17 reported incidents (13 in Borno and 4 in Yobe) of looting of drugs and vaccines from primary health centres, followed by the destruction of these facilities. Access for health-care workers was also restricted during the period. According to information from the Polio National Emergency Operations Centre, by December 2014, 53 per cent of the territory of Borno State and 13 per cent of Yobe State was inaccessible for polio eradication activities as the result of insecurity.

68. Towards the end of the reporting period, Boko Haram also perpetrated attacks on hospitals in neighbouring countries. In the Diffa region of the Niger, five incidents of attacks on hospitals were verified. For example, on 13 October in the Niger, Boko Haram attacked a health centre in Gueskerou, close to Diffa, and looted medical supplies.

E. Abduction

69. During the reporting period, 567 incidents of abduction affecting 836 children (532 boys and 304 girls) were verified. Owing to the lack of systematic reporting on missing persons, as well as limited access to conflict-affected areas, it is probable that the full extent of child abductions by Boko Haram since 2013 is significantly higher. Credible reports indicate that Boko Haram has been responsible for the abduction of at least 4,000 girls, boys and young women. In this regard, between October 2015 and June 2016, the United Nations documented accounts of 8,707 children who had been rescued, escaped or surrendered to the Nigerian security forces and the Civilian Joint Task Force. Of this number, 2,506 children (1,148 boys and 1,358 girls) reportedly had been abducted by Boko Haram since the start of the conflict.

70. The group's stated motives for abductions included retaliation against the Government for the detention of relatives and punishment of schoolchildren for attending Western-style schools. Abduction was also used as a means to forcibly recruit children, and Boko Haram also used abducted children as human shields during military operations by the Nigerian security forces. According to accounts from those who escaped or were rescued, children were subjected to rape and forced marriage, physical and psychological abuse, forced labour, forcible religious conversion and used in operations, including suicide attacks.

71. The abduction of 276 females (110 under the age of 18 years) by Boko Haram from a school in Chibok, Borno State, in April 2014 represented the largest single incident in the reporting period. Fifty-seven of these abductees managed to escape in the weeks following the incident and one girl was rescued by the Civilian Joint Task Force and the Nigerian security forces in April 2016. In October 2016, 21 additional abductees were released by Boko Haram, following a negotiation process supported by international actors. Some 197 of the Chibok abductees were unaccounted for at the time of writing in January 2017. In separate incidents in September 2014, 145 young women and girls (aged between 8 and 23 years) were abducted from villages during several attacks in Adamawa State.

72. In 2015, 167 cases of abduction were reported, of which the United Nations verified 110, affecting 99 boys and 11 girls. Large-scale incidents were also reported but could not be verified owing to security constraints. For example, on 6 January, 134 girls and young women (ranging from 10 to 23 years) and 84 boys under 15 years were reportedly abducted by Boko Haram from Katarko village,

Borno State. In the following weeks, 182 of the abductees were reportedly released; however, the fate of the remaining 36 persons was unknown.

73. Cross-border abductions were also reportedly prevalent during this period. For example, in January 2015, approximately 50 children aged between 10 and 15 years, were reportedly abducted by Boko Haram during an incursion into the Far North region of Cameroon.

74. Between January and December 2016, abduction continued, although at a smaller scale. Fourteen incidents of abduction were verified, affecting 34 children (17 boys and 17 girls). In March 2016, two girls were abducted while fishing at Malakwaya River in Adamawa State. In June 2016, Tungomari village, Borno State, was attacked by Boko Haram, which abducted three boys aged between 12 and 16 years.

F. Denial of humanitarian access

75. Between January 2013 and mid-2015, access and the provision of humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected children and their families were severely restricted. The declaration of a state of emergency resulted in the partial blockage of movement for humanitarian personnel and relief items. The security situation also resulted in the temporary suspension of activities by the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations in parts of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States from December 2013 to March 2015.

76. Notwithstanding the restrictions, there were limited targeted attacks on humanitarian personnel. However, in Yobe State in September 2015, two staff of the Subnational Immunization Days vaccination team were abducted but later released. Moreover, four staff of the National Emergency Management Agency were injured during a bomb explosion on 11 September 2015 in Malkohi camp for internally displaced persons, Adamawa State. Lastly, on 28 July 2016, a United Nations humanitarian convoy was attacked by unknown assailants while returning to Maiduguri after delivery of humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons. Two employees were injured and the UNICEF operations were temporarily suspended in Bama local government area.

V. Advocacy and dialogue with parties to conflict

77. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict visited Nigeria in January 2015 to assess the impact of conflict on children, support the roll-out of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and engage with the Government, including sharing her concerns regarding allegations of violations committed by the Nigerian security forces, the Civilian Joint Task Force and vigilante groups. The Special Representative met with civilian and military authorities who expressed their readiness to cooperate, including through the establishment of a Federal-level interministerial committee and State-level committees on children in the affected States. In part owing to a change in the Government, these mechanisms were yet to be established at the time of writing in January 2017.

78. Following the visit, later in January 2015, the Minister of Justice issued an advisory on the unlawful use of children in hostilities, reiterating the Government's obligations under international law and urging the military to ensure that personnel at all levels desist from using children. The advisory also stated that the Civilian Joint Task Force and other vigilante groups remained outside the command and control of the Federal Government and reiterated a commitment to bring to account

those who use children in hostilities. In November 2015 in Dakar, the Special Representative met with the new National Security Adviser, who was receptive to concerns regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and expressed a willingness to cooperate on the issue.

79. In response to child recruitment and use by the Civilian Joint Task Force, UNICEF undertook advocacy with the group's leadership. On 12 October 2016, a workshop was held with senior leaders and sector commanders to discuss the development of an action plan to address grave violations, with a focus on ending the recruitment and use of children. Following these discussions, the Civilian Joint Task Force has committed to: sending out written orders to all its members prohibiting child recruitment and use; providing the United Nations with comprehensive information on children in their ranks to facilitate verification, screening and separation; appointing a five-member committee to oversee the drafting and implementation of an action plan; and constituting a seven-member disciplinary committee to respond to incidents of child recruitment and use. The Task Force also pledged that it would ensure compatibility with national and international law.

80. In December 2015, the United Nations supported the National Human Rights Commission, the Offices of the Chief of Defence Staff and Chief of Army Staff to organize a workshop to review the military Code of Conduct and Rules of Engagement for the Lafiya Dole Operation. The workshop led to the revised Code of Conduct and Rules of Engagement, which reflected essential aspects of international humanitarian and human rights law. The draft documents included provisions for the handover of children encountered during military operations to civilian authorities within 72 hours; however, neither document had been adopted at the time of writing in January 2017.

81. The United Nations and the Nigerian security forces conducted eight meetings between February and October 2016 to discuss the adoption of a stand-alone protocol for the handover of children encountered during military operations to civilian authorities. Six other meetings were held between April and December 2016 with the commander of the Lafiya Dole Operation in Maiduguri to prepare for the operationalization of the protocol, including granting child protection actors access to detention facilities.

82. In this regard, in April 2016, the United Nations accessed 13 military facilities inside Giwa barracks in Maiduguri, and the 7th Infantry Division of the Nigerian security forces and UNICEF agreed on a schedule for monthly visits to all detention facilities. A draft operational framework to support the care and protection of children in detention, and secure their release and return to their communities was being reviewed by the Nigerian security forces at the time of writing in January 2017.

83. In February 2016, the Nigerian security forces established a human rights desk at its headquarters in Abuja, which included lawyers from the Nigerian Bar Association. The desk was mandated to advise the Nigerian security forces command on human rights issues, particularly in the context of military operations. In addition, in March 2016, the Chief of Defence Staff established a committee comprising senior officers to investigate ongoing public reports of human rights violations involving the Nigerian security forces.

84. Lastly, in response to attacks on schools and the abduction of children, the Government launched the Safe Schools Initiative, aimed at providing education and piloting safe education facilities in the three conflict-affected States. Nigeria also endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in May 2015, by which it committed to

implement the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

85. In neighbouring countries, in accordance with a protocol adopted in 2014 for the handover of children associated with armed groups, the Government of Chad released and reintegrated 540 children who were allegedly associated with Boko Haram. My Special Representative also met with the President of the Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou, in September 2016 and emphasized the importance of treating children allegedly associated with Boko Haram primarily as victims. A standard operating procedure to hand over children allegedly associated with armed groups to child protection actors was signed in February 2017.

VI. Programmatic response

86. In response to the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in north-eastern Nigeria, UNICEF and its partners provided 402,375 children with psychosocial support between December 2014 and December 2016 through a network of trained community volunteers. Also, 11,903 unaccompanied and separated children were registered and supported through alternative care services and 328 of them were reunified with their families. An additional 10,988 children received mine risk education through a community awareness programme.

87. In March 2016, UNICEF and its partners commenced a community-based dialogue, social rehabilitation and reintegration programme aimed at addressing negative community perceptions of girls and women formerly associated with Boko Haram, including survivors of sexual violence, as well as supporting the reintegration of children who had been recruited and used. By December 2016, there were a total of 6,501 child beneficiaries (4,094 girls and 2,407 boys). In addition, UNICEF supported the Government of Borno State to establish a transit centre for children and women formerly associated with Boko Haram, assisting 430 children who were released from Giwa barracks. These children were later reunified with their families.

VII. Recommendations

88. **I condemn in the strongest possible terms the continuous grave violations against children by Boko Haram. The large numbers of children who have been killed and maimed, suffered sexual violence and recruited and used by armed groups is seriously concerning and I call upon Boko Haram to immediately end grave violations against children.**

89. **I strongly condemn attacks on schools, hospitals, and protected personnel as well as other humanitarian actors and facilities. I call upon all parties to respect the civilian character of schools and hospitals and to allow safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian actors to affected populations.**

90. **I call upon the Government and the Civilian Joint Task Force to ensure that the recruitment and use of children by Task Force is ended. I encourage the Task Force to finalize the development and implementation of a time-bound action plan to end this practice.**

91. **I urge the Government of Nigeria to abide by its obligations under international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law and ensure civilians are protected during armed conflict. In this regard, I welcome the inclusion of specific child protection provisions in the revised code of conduct and rules of engagement and call upon the Government and the Nigerian security forces to**

ensure that these documents are swiftly adopted and widely disseminated to all security forces. I also welcome the establishment of a human rights desk at the Nigerian army headquarters and encourage the inclusion of dedicated child protection capacity to investigate grave violations.

92. **I call upon the Government of Nigeria to ensure that all children allegedly associated with armed groups are primarily treated as victims and, in particular, that the 68 boys who have been detained since September 2015 are immediately released and reintegrated. In this regard, I encourage the Government to put in place a protocol for the handover of children encountered during the course of military operations to civilian authorities. Furthermore, I am encouraged by the Government's commitment to providing access to United Nations monitors to some detention facilities and I urge that regular access be allowed to all places of detention.**

93. **I commend the Government of Nigeria for its continuous cooperation with the United Nations and look forward to the swift establishment of the Federal and State-level interministerial committees on children and armed conflict.**

94. **I welcome the contributions of donors to the United Nations, civil society organizations and the Government of Nigeria to support humanitarian programmes, especially those that support children affected by armed conflict. I urge donors to enhance their financial support to these programmes, in particular for the reintegration of children who have been recruited and used and girls who have suffered sexual violence.**